

THE STATE OF Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Australian Workplaces

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This report was written by Gerwyn Davies of the Australian HR Institute; with contributions from Roman Ruzbacky of Roman Ruzbacky & Associates, James Hare of Equality Group, Dr Michelle Phipps, Chief People Office of VetPartners and Chair of AHRI’s Diversity & Inclusion Panel, and Sarah McCann-Bartlett, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian HR Institute. We would like to thank the many employers who took part in the research for this report: the 307 establishments that responded to the survey and especially those who took part in our case studies.

Foreword

The ethical and business cases for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are well known across Australian workplaces. More recently, staff shortages, one of the most significant challenges facing Australian organisations in 2023 has emerged as another compelling reason for organisations to ensure their workplaces can attract, support and retain a diverse workforce.

While much of the public debate is dedicated to the role that migration and skills can play in addressing staff shortages and other challenges; less attention is given to the impact that diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces can have in attracting and retaining staff.

The Australian HR Institute (AHRI) undertook research in November and December 2022 to provide a perspective on the current state of DEI in Australian workplaces. The research included a survey of 307 HR professionals and gathered a number of case studies drawn from respondents.

Two clear themes emerge from the research:

- 1. There is a clear gap between employer awareness, intent and action.** The vast majority (84%) of HR professionals say that DEI is critical to the future success of their organisation. However, only half (50%) of HR professionals say that their leaders see DEI as a priority for their organisation, while a similar proportion (49%) of HR professionals also say that their organisation is not placing enough focus on DEI. The gap between intent and practice is reinforced by the survey data which also highlights relatively low levels of transparency in terms of collecting diversity data.
- 2. DEI activity in Australian workplaces focuses largely on gender** and to a lesser extent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Less effort is directed towards other under-represented groups; for example, people living with disability, people who are LGBTQIA+ and those from a lower socio-economic background. There is also a widespread perception among HR professionals that many groups are under-represented in their own organisations.

There is therefore significant scope to improve DEI practice in many Australian workplaces. This potential for boosting the employment rates of under-represented groups is illustrated in one recent international study, which shows that Australia rates as average when benchmarked globally in terms of the employment rate of people with a disability (OECD 2022) (see Annex). According to official data, the employment rate of people with a disability aged between 15 and 64 is 48%. By comparison, the employment rate for those without a disability in Australia is 80%.

There is an ethical, legal, economic and labour market imperative to creating diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces in Australia. The pathway to realising this potential lies in leaders, managers and HR professionals working together to transform workplace culture through more deliberate interventions for the good of all Australian employees.

Key findings

ADOPTION OF DEI TARGETS AND INITIATIVES

- A small minority of HR professionals has set employment targets to improve the share of people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse (11%), culturally diverse people (9%) and people who are LGBTQIA+ (5%) in their workforce. Fewer still have set targets to improve the representation of older workers (2%) and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in their workforce (0%).

By comparison, almost a third of organisations have set targets to improve the representation of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples (31%) and women (30%). On average, the share of organisations that have set targets is much higher in the public sector than in the private sector and the not-for-profit sector.

- Flexible working arrangements (66%), inclusive language used in job advertisements (53%) and using structured interviews [standard questions] for promotions and recruitment (41%) are the most popular tactics used by HR professionals to increase DEI through their recruitment practices.
- The most popular employment practices adopted by HR professionals to help boost the participation of under-represented groups are staff consultation exercises (65%), inclusive policies or practices such as equal parental leave (47%) and diversity training (45%). By comparison, fewer organisations report that they have introduced a leadership diversity taskforce (17%) or sponsorship and mentoring programmes (28%).
- 39% of HR professionals report that they require their managers to undertake training on diversity, equity and inclusion.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEI TO BUSINESS STRATEGY

- 84% of HR professionals say that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is either fairly important or very important to the future success of their organisation.
- Just half (50%) of HR professionals report that their leaders see DEI as a priority for their organisation. In addition, HR professionals are more likely to report that their organisation is not doing enough on DEI issues compared with those who are satisfied with their organisation's efforts. Almost half (49%) of HR professionals that say that their organisation is not placing enough focus on DEI. By comparison, 46% of HR professionals say they are satisfied with the level of focus on DEI at their organisation.



MEASUREMENT

- 45% of HR professionals say that they measure the DEI profile of their organisation compared with 43% of establishments that don't. 12% of organisations are either unsure or don't know.
- Among those that measure their diversity profile of their organisation, the vast majority of HR professionals say their organisation measures gender (97%), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (81%) and culturally diverse people (75%). By comparison, a smaller proportion of HR professionals report collecting data on the current make-up of the workforce on people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse (60%), older workers (57%), people who are LGBTQIA+ (56%) and people from a lower socio-economic background (7%).
- According to the survey data, the most under-represented groups in Australian workplaces are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse. More than three quarters (76%) of survey respondents perceive that both Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse (76%) are under-represented in their organisation. A relatively high share of HR professionals (43%) also say that people who are LGBTQIA+ are not fairly represented in their organisation.
- When asked which groups were being prioritised by their organisations, the most commonly-cited groups were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (58%) and women (55%).

DEI AND LEADERSHIP

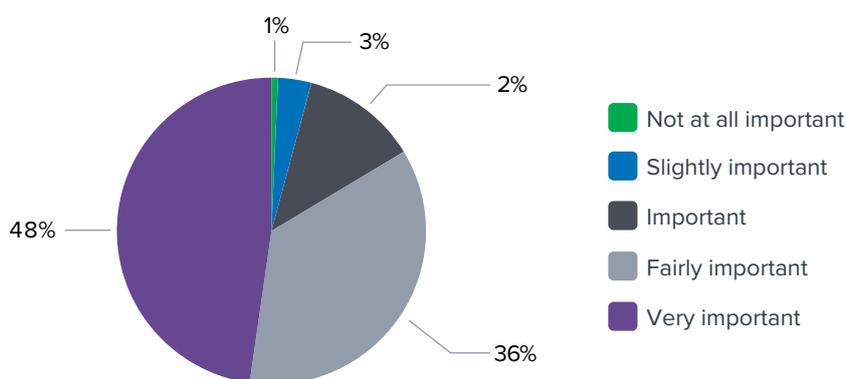
- 96% of HR professionals say that women are represented in senior management in their organisation. Representation in senior management is also high for older workers (84%) and culturally diverse people (60%). By contrast, representation is much lower for people who are LGBTQIA+ (29%), Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people (17%), people who identify as having a disability/neurodiverse (14%) and people from a lower socio-economic background (10%).
- Around a quarter (24%) of HR professionals report that at least one person in their senior management team, including the Managing Director or Chief Executive, have diversity targets in their key performance indicators. Around a third (32%) HR professionals are unsure.
- 86% of HR professionals say that women are represented on their board. By comparison, just 5% of HR professionals say that people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse are represented on their board. 16% of HR professionals report that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented on the board in their organisation.
- Almost half (48%) of HR professionals believe that mandatory quotas should be introduced to improve diversity in board positions compared with 29% who are opposed. 22% of HR professionals said they didn't know.

Survey data

AWARENESS AND ACTION DEFICIT

The survey data shows that the vast majority of Australian workplaces value the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion; but many employers are failing to act on it in their organisation. More than four fifths (84%) of HR professionals say that diversity, equity and inclusion is either very important or fairly important to the future success of their organisation.

FIGURE 1: HR PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTION OF IMPORTANCE OF DEI TO FUTURE SUCCESS



BASE: 287 HR PROFESSIONALS

Yet, fewer than half (49%) of HR professionals that say that their organisation is not placing enough focus on DEI; which is higher than the proportion (46%) who say they are satisfied with the level of focus on DEI at their organisation.

Our research also discovered that many HR professionals do not believe that their leaders are taking the issue seriously enough. Just half of HR professionals (50%) say that leaders in their organisation deem DEI either a top priority or a priority.

MAJORITY OF EMPLOYERS ARE FAILING TO TAKE BASIC STEPS TO MONITOR DEI

This 'leadership diversity deficit' may partly explain why data collection and reporting show low levels of take-up according to the survey data. Fewer than half (45%) of HR professionals surveyed measure the diversity profile of their organisation compared with 43% of establishments that don't. 12% of HR professionals are either unsure or don't know.

Among those that measure the diversity profile of their organisation, the research showed variation across the different groups in terms of measurement. On the upside, measurement is high for women (97%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (81%) and culturally diverse people (75%).



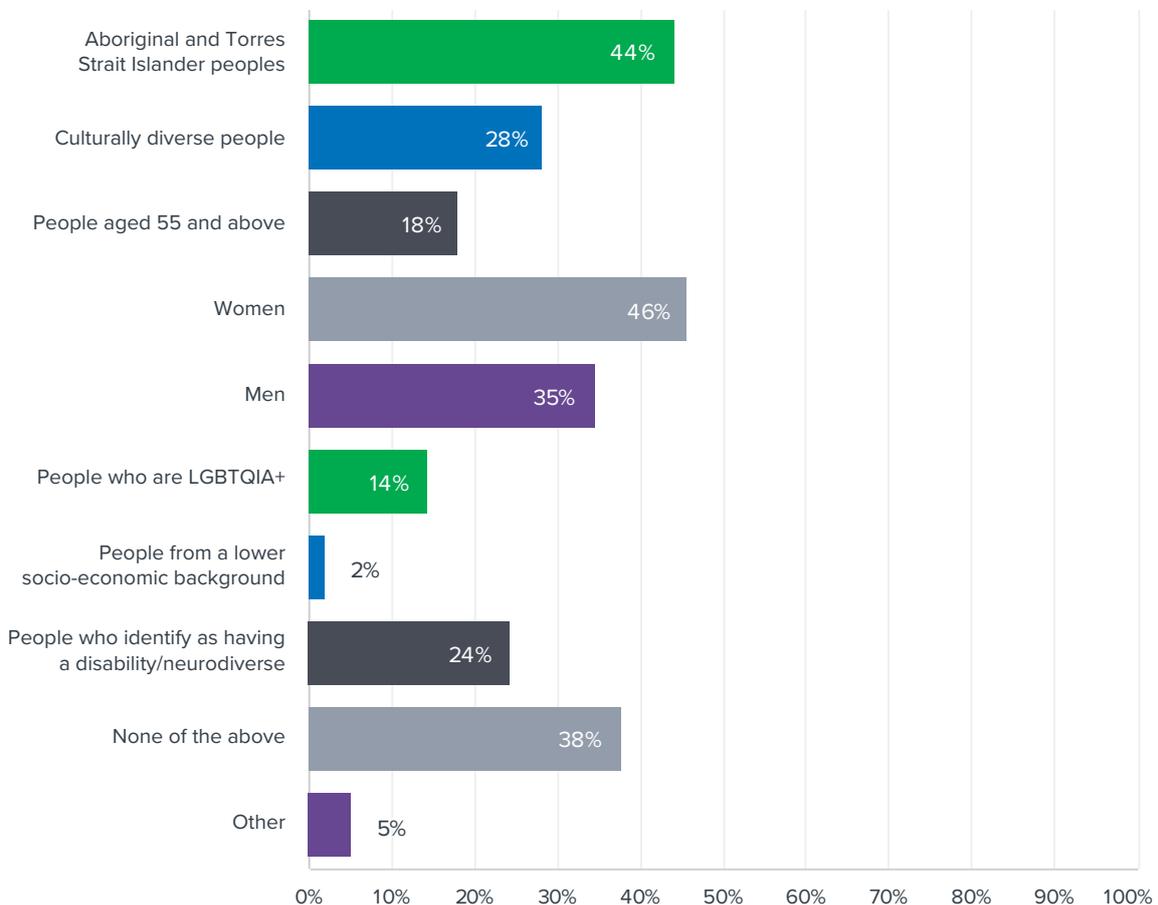
By comparison, a smaller proportion of HR professionals measure people who report as having a disability or neurodiverse (60%), older workers (57%), people who are LGBTQIA+ (56%) and people from a lower socio-economic background (7%).

Overall, this means that fewer than a third of all employers capture data on the background of four of the six key groups identified in this survey.

The proportion of organisations that capture diversity data during the recruitment process is even lower.

Almost four in ten (38%) of HR professionals say that their organisation does not capture data at recruitment stage for any of the groups identified in this survey (Figure 2). There is also large variation across the groups, ranging from 44% of HR professionals that report measuring the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to just 2% of HR professionals who say that they capture data on the socio-economic background of new recruits in their organisation. There is also considerable variation between sectors, most notably in terms of people living with disabilities or who are neurodiverse. More than half (51%) of public sector HR professionals say they record data on people with disabilities or neurodiverse when hiring compared with just 15% of HR professionals in the private sector.

FIGURE 2: SHARE OF ORGANISATIONS THAT CAPTURE DIVERSITY DATA DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS



In addition, just over a quarter (26%) of HR professionals say that their organisation measures the DEI profile of their organisation assess the intersectionality between different groups or characteristics.

WHICH GROUPS ARE PERCEIVED TO BE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES?

The absence of data collection and reporting in many Australian workplaces is amplified by the perception among HR professionals that many groups are under-represented in the vast majority of Australian organisations. According to the survey data, more than three quarters of HR professionals (76%) say that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are under-represented in their organisation. Under-representation is also reported for people who identify as having a disability or who are neurodiverse (76%) and people who are LGBTQIA+ (43%).

These findings are broadly consistent with many of the case studies highlighted in this report, many of whom report being in the early stages of developing a DEI strategy. As a result, many organisations are focused on gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; which is at least partly due to the government's efforts to improve employment outcomes for these groups.

When asked which groups are being prioritised by their organisations, the most commonly-cited groups identified by HR professionals include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (58%), women (55%), culturally diverse people (37%) and people with disabilities or who are neurodiverse (33%). Relatively few HR professionals report focusing on older workers (13%) and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (6%).

In terms of sector, almost four-fifths (79%) of HR professionals in public sector organisations prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; around twice the share of HR professionals in the private sector (40%). The proportion of HR professionals prioritising people with disabilities or who are neurodiverse is also much higher in the public sector (46%) than in the private sector (26%).

EMPLOYERS ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH IN TERMS OF HIRING PRACTICES

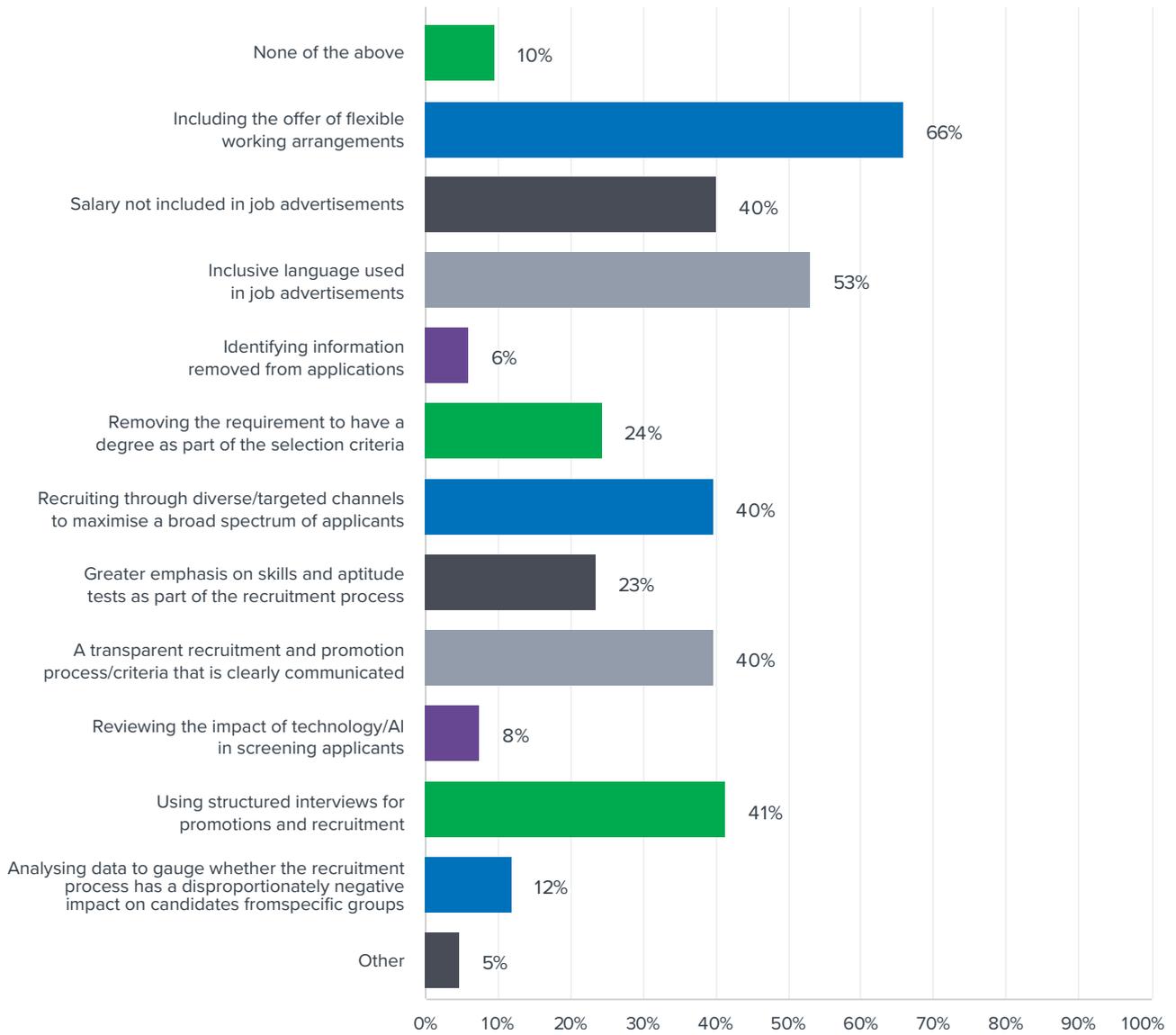
On the upside, there is ample evidence that the vast majority of organisations are making efforts to attract a wider spectrum of applicants. The most popular means of increasing DEI through recruitment practices are flexible working arrangements (66%), inclusive language in job advertisements (53%) and using structured interviews for promotions and recruitment (41%) (Figure 3).

However, there is considerable scope for improvement. Fewer than half of HR professionals also say that they use diverse/targeted channels to maximise a broad spectrum of applicants, remove the requirement to have a degree as part of the recruitment process or have a transparent recruitment and promotion process. Less than a quarter (23%) of HR professionals say that they put greater emphasis on skills and



aptitude tests as part of the recruitment process to maximise the chances of an equitable outcome.

FIGURE 3: KEY RECRUITMENT PRACTICES DESIGNED TO INCREASE DIVERSITY



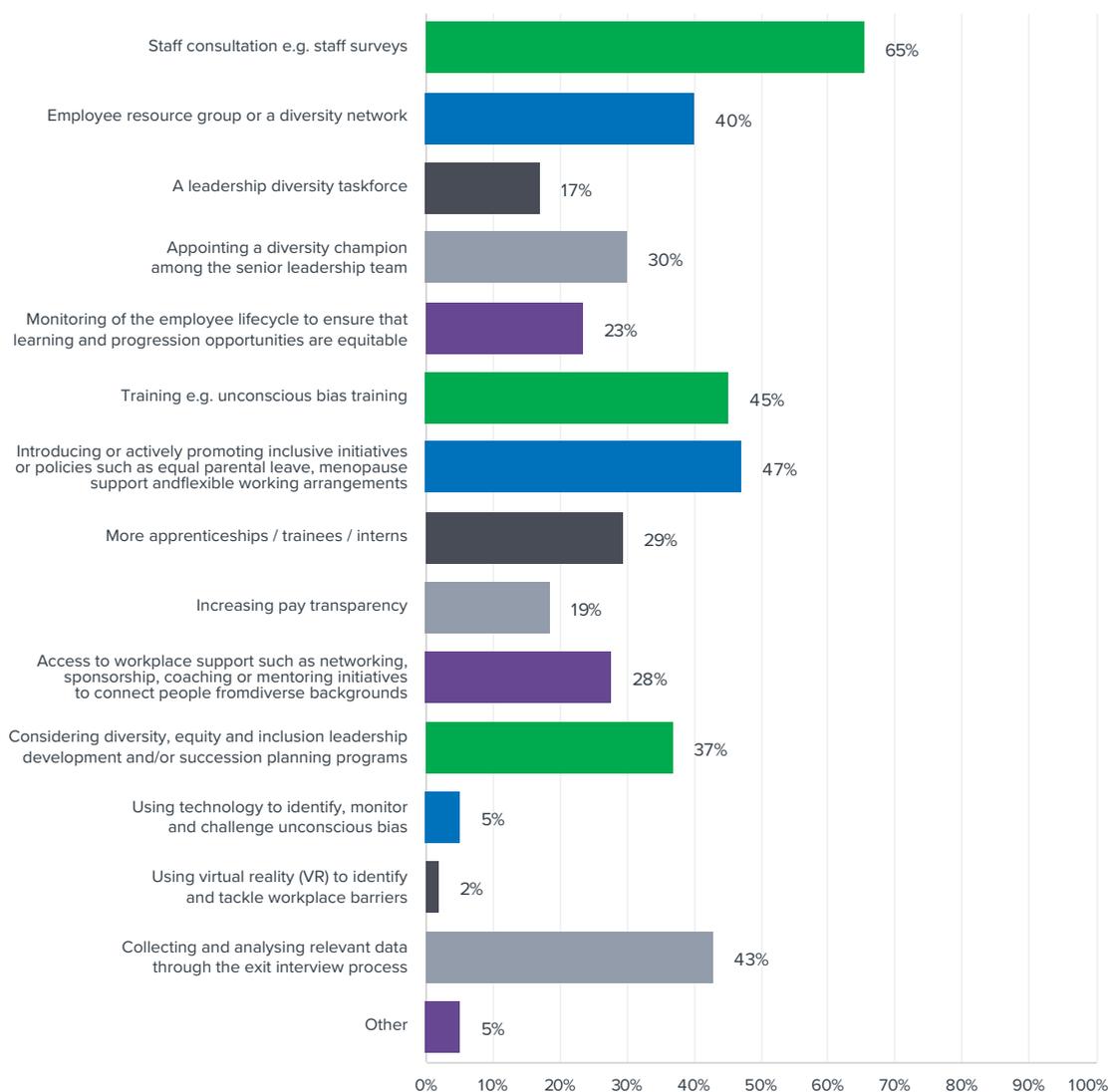
BASE: 252 EMPLOYERS

Employers adopt a variety of tactics to transform workplace culture

Meanwhile, the most popular employment practices used by HR professionals to boost the representation of under-represented groups are staff consultation exercises (65%), inclusive policies or practices such as equal parental leave (47%) and diversity training (45%) (Figure 4). Meanwhile, 39% of HR professional say that their organisation requires managers to undertake training on diversity, equity and inclusion. The data in this survey reinforces the case for more leadership and management training, such as DEIB awareness training and information sessions; especially given the tightness of the labour market.

By comparison, relatively few organisations report that they have introduced a leadership diversity taskforce (17%) or sponsorship and mentoring programmes (28%). Research evidence suggests that both of these interventions have strong positive effects on increasing diversity in organisations (Dobbin, Kalev & Kelly, 2007) (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

FIGURE 4: KEY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES UTILISED TO INCREASE DEI

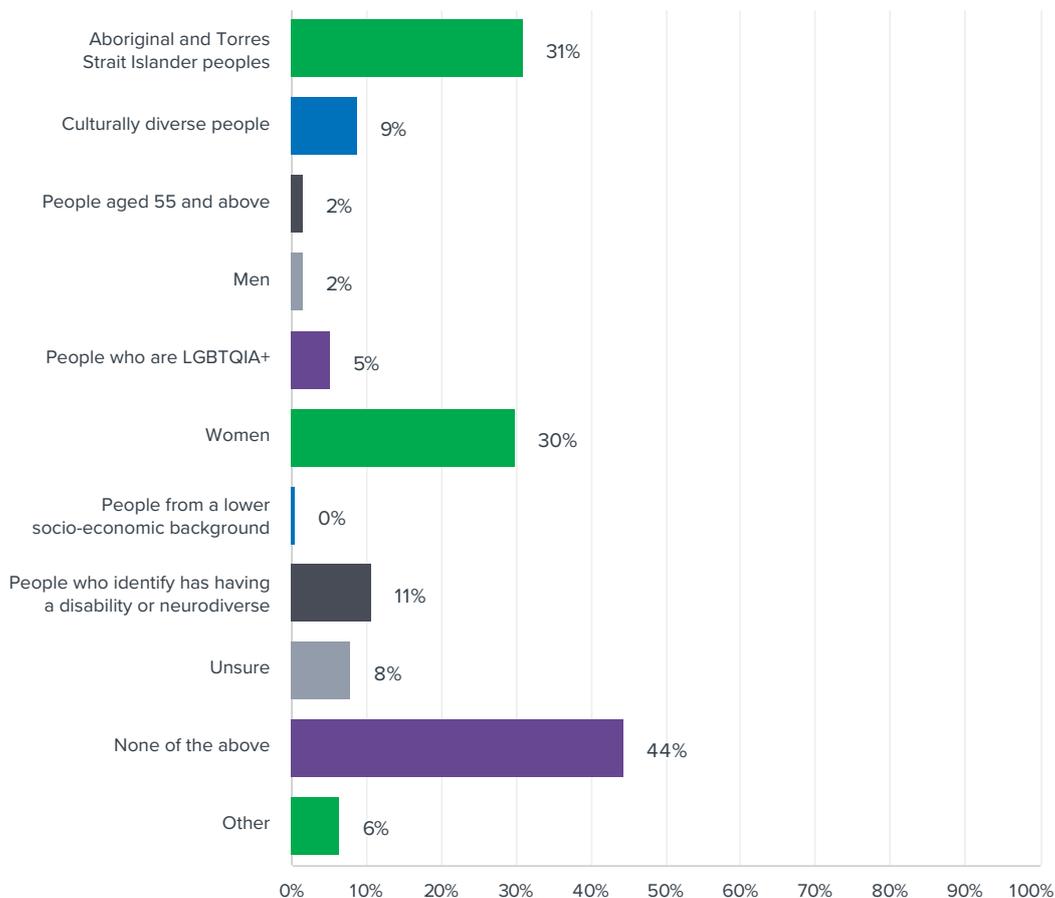


BASE: 252 HR PROFESSIONALS

Targets

A small minority of HR professionals say their organisation has set employment targets to improve the share of people with disabilities/neurodiverse (11%), culturally diverse people (9%) and people who are LGBTQIA+ (5%) in the workforce. Fewer still have set targets to improve the representation of older workers (2%) and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in their workforce (0%). By comparison, almost a third of HR professionals say that their organisation has set targets to improve the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (31%) and women (30%).

FIGURE 5: SHARE OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE SET EMPLOYMENT TARGETS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS



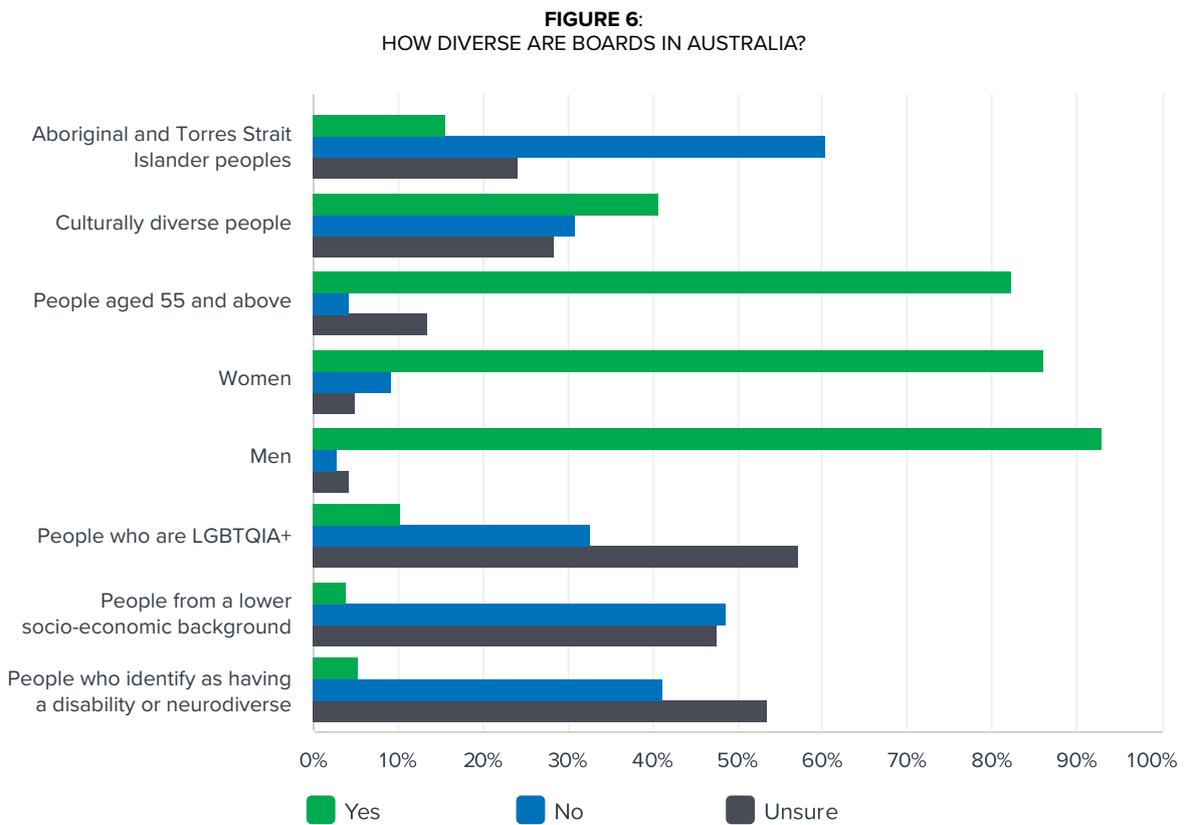
BASE: 252 HR PROFESSIONALS

On average, the share of organisations that have set targets is much higher in the public sector than in the private sector. For instance, four fifths (80%) of HR professionals say they have set targets to improve the share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in their organisation compared with just 16% of private sector firms. There is also a gap between the public and private sector in terms of setting targets for people living with disabilities or neurodiverse. Almost half (46%) of public sector HR professionals report that they have set targets to improve the proportion of employees from this group compared with just 4% of HR professionals in the private sector.



BOARD REPRESENTATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS SHOWS LARGE VARIATION

The vast majority of (86%) HR professionals say that women are represented on their boards. By comparison, just 5% of HR professionals say that people with disabilities are represented on their board. 16% of establishments report that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented on their board. Some caution should be attached to these figures given the smaller sample size and the relatively high proportion of HR professionals who say they are unsure.

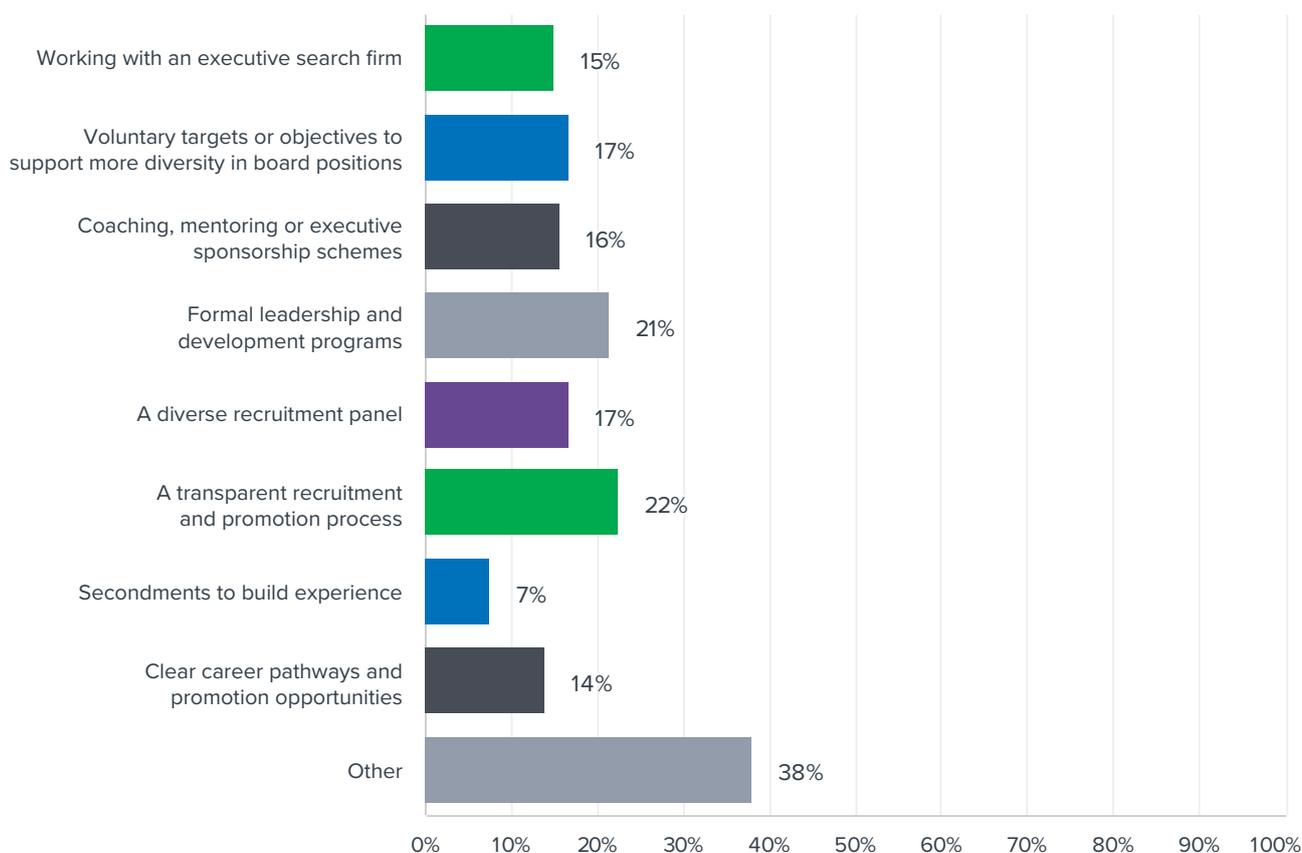


BASE: 187 HR PROFESSIONALS

The number of initiatives or measures adopted by organisations to improve diversity on boards is broad-based. The most popular tactics include a transparent recruitment and promotion process (22%), formal leadership development programmes (21%), a diverse recruitment panel (17%) and voluntary targets or objectives to support more board diversity (17%) (Figure 7). Care should be taken not to over-interpret the data due to the small sample size and the large proportion who do not provide a definitive response.



FIGURE 7: TACTICS USED BY EMPLOYERS TO ACCELERATE DIVERSITY ON BOARDS



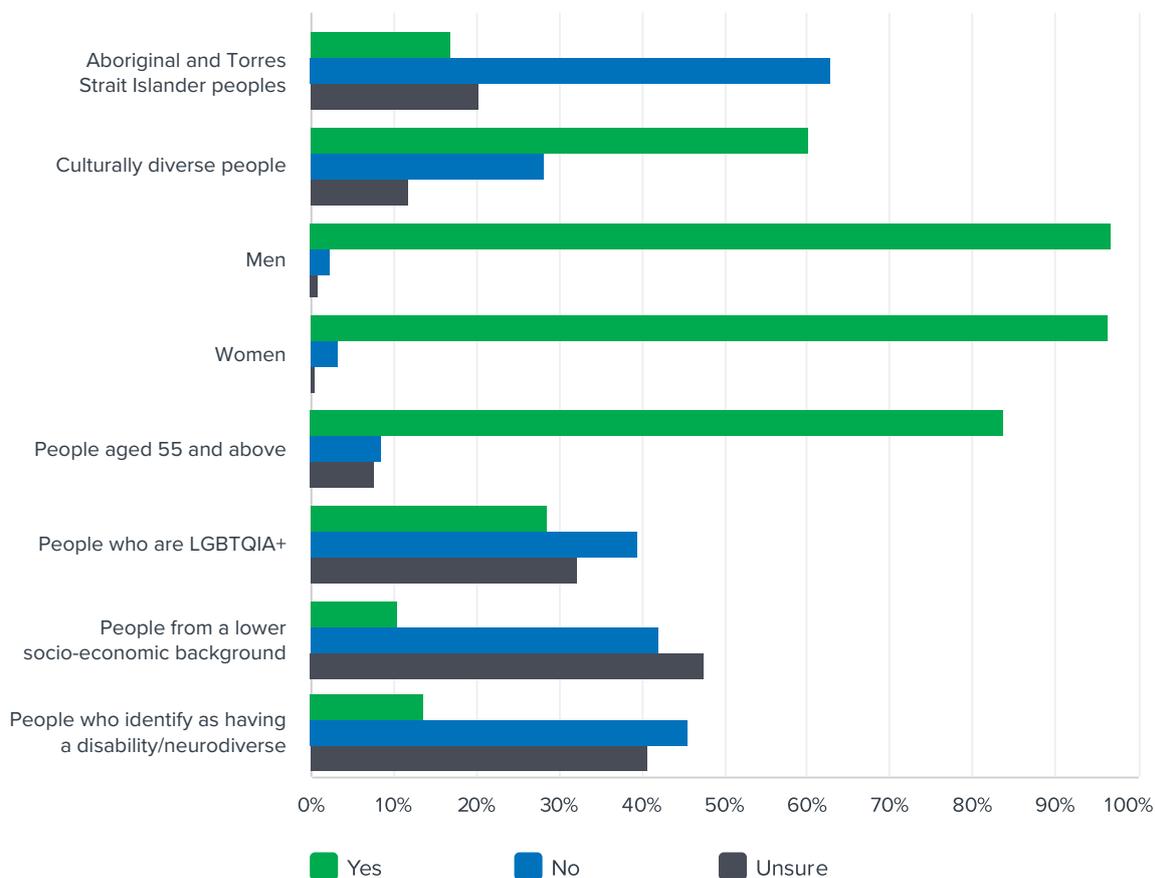
BASE: 187 HR PROFESSIONALS

Almost half (48%) of HR professionals believe that mandatory quotas should be introduced to improve diversity among boards. In comparison, 29% of HR professionals say they are opposed to quotas and just over a fifth (22%) of HR professionals said they don't know.

At the same time, almost all (96%) HR professionals say that women are represented in senior management. Representation in senior management is also high for older workers (84%) and culturally diverse people (60%). By contrast, representation is much lower for people who are LGBTQIA+ (29%), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (17%), people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse (14%), and people from a lower socio-economic background (10%).



FIGURE 7:
HOW DIVERSE IS SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN AUSTRALIA?

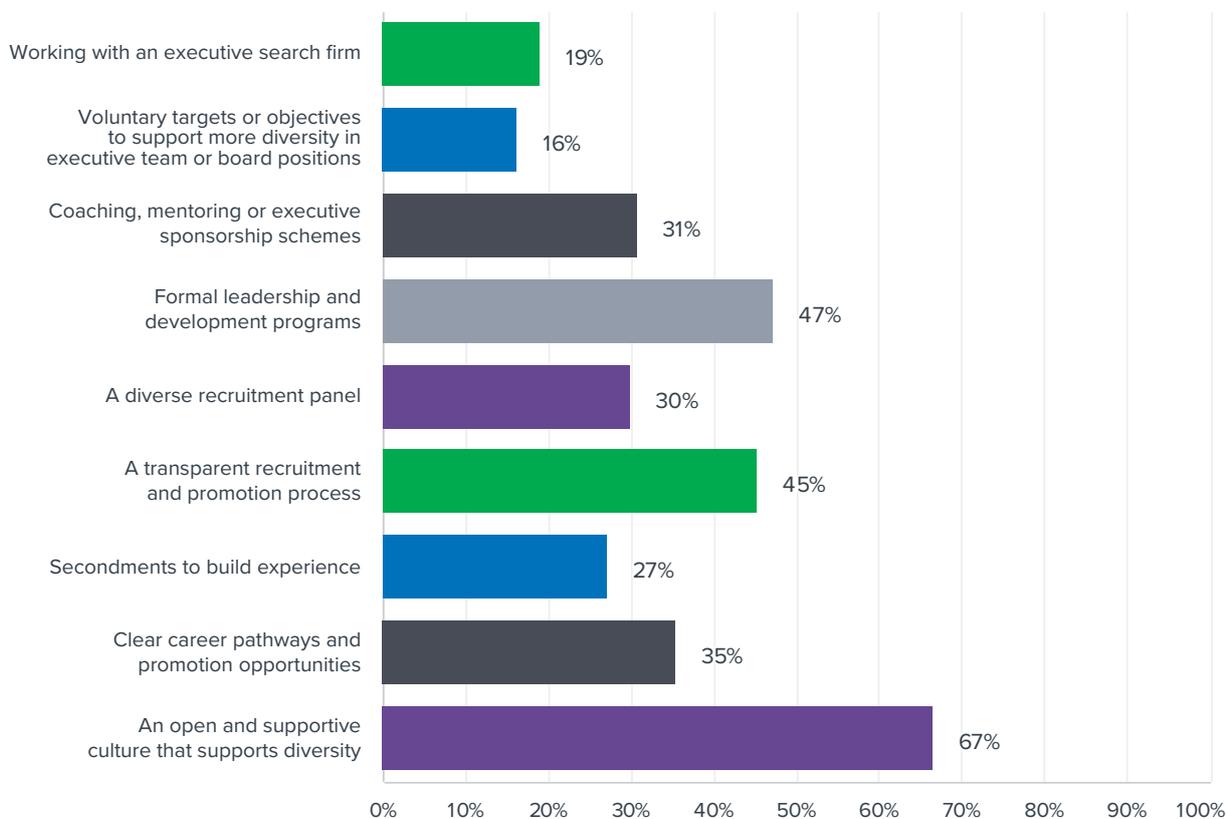


BASE: 221 HR PROFESSIONALS

Meanwhile, there is stronger evidence that organisations are seeking to improve the diversity in senior management. Tactics used by employers include an open and supportive culture (cited by 67% of HR professionals) formal leadership and development programmes (47%), a transparent recruitment and promotion process (45%), clear career pathways and promotion process (35%), coaching, mentoring or sponsorship schemes (31%) and secondments to build experience (27%).



FIGURE 8: TACTICS USED BY EMPLOYERS TO ACCELERATE DIVERSITY ON BOARDS



BASE: 221 HR PROFESSIONALS

Additionally, around a quarter (24%) of HR professionals report that at least one person in their senior management team, including the Managing Director or Chief Executive, have diversity targets in their key performance indicators. By comparison, 44% of HR professionals say that they have not set diversity targets for any member of their senior management team. Almost a third (32%) of HR professionals say that they don't know.

Case studies



RES

Amanda White is Global Head of Diversity at RES, a global renewable energy company.

Two years ago, the group introduced a new diversity and inclusion strategy. One of the key tenets of the strategy includes a clear commitment by senior management to diversity and inclusion. This commitment is reflected in the establishment of five employee affinity network groups. The groups cover five dimensions of diversity, equity and inclusion; including age, LGBTQIA+, race, gender and disability, each of which have an Executive Sponsor from the Group Executive Team. The group also has an 'Origins' working group that is dedicated to First Nations people and a Reconciliation Action Plan.

The groups have developed and delivered key changes to policies and practices at the organisation. Key policy developments include the introduction of both a menopause policy, a gender affirmation policy, gender neutral parental leave, pay and bonus gap reporting, domestic family violence support and the introduction expansion of cultural holidays. Meanwhile, a review of recruitment practices, which aims to remove artificial barriers to hiring under-represented groups across the organisation, has led to key changes to job descriptions and the organisation's use of AI. In addition, the group has also hosted educational and awareness sessions on ADHD, Dyslexia, ASD, and LGBTQIA+.

Looking ahead, RES is currently developing a new D&I strategy, which will focus on building accountability throughout the organisation and the removal of systemic barriers within each stage of the talent life cycle. Alongside the development of the strategy, RES has started to focus on social mobility, diversity of supply chain, social impact on communities, inclusive leadership, and diversity of workforce and leadership.



INTERRELATE

Jill Rowe is Head of Head of People, Culture and Workforce Development.

Interrelate is a not-for-profit provider of relationship services that specialises in empowering people to build strong, respectful, resilient and healthy relationships across the lifespan. Many of Interrelate's services are government-funded. Its social enterprises include:

- School Services, delivering relationship and sexuality education programs to primary school children and their families
- I relate Collaborative Family Law – a family law practice
- I relate Health – a provider of online mental health services.

Employee well-being and diversity and inclusion lie at the heart of the business strategy at Interrelate. The organisation is currently expanding and keen to ensure the demography of the workforce represents the communities they work with, particularly some of the more vulnerable and/or under-represented groups.

Culture

Interrelate's approach to creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive organisation is to build up employee voice through its active support for three key groups. These include First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse people and the LGBTQIA+ community.

One of the best illustrations of their support for these groups is the employee reference groups (ERGs). Underlining the importance of the groups to the organisation, the CEO attends every meeting of every Employee Reference Group and all members of the Executive Team take an active interest in the ERGs.

According to the organisation, these groups have been invaluable to understanding clients and making the organisation an inclusive place to work, with every individual feeling valued and respected.

Recruitment

Through the employee reference groups, the organisation has reviewed its recruitment practices and branding to attract more candidates from each of the groups. For example, the recruitment advertisements within First Nations communities use culturally sensitive creative design including Aboriginal art and language that First Nations candidates will immediately relate to. All candidates are given the opportunity to talk to a current employee who can answer questions about our culture and our policies that may be significant for them to feel included and comfortable in the organisation.



“CLAIRE”

“This [ADHD diagnosis] was news to me. I slipped through the cracks for far too long, and I am determined to prevent this happening to other people, and support others like me that were missed.”

“Claire” was diagnosed with ADHD 2 years ago. “Claire” is passionate about the critical role that people management plays in creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce.

This is partly due to being on the receiving end of poor management practice while employed at a large retailer. “Claire” recounts that her line manager at her former employer made a series of criticisms of her during performance review, which came as a complete surprise. This came at a time when “Claire” disclosed her diagnosis to her line manager. One of the key criticisms levelled at her included being distracted at meetings, which she describes as one of the key traits of ADHD. In addition, the same line manager would describe colleagues with ADHD as “odd”.

“Claire” believes that her line manager’s ignorance about ADHD and the leadership culture at the organisation led directly to her “not feeling safe” at the organisation and her subsequent departure from the organisation.

By contrast, “Claire” has been consistently rated as a “high performer” in all her other leadership roles. This includes her current employer, whose leadership team makes DEI central to its workplace culture.

One of the key features of the culture is to encourage employees to feel comfortable to reveal their disabilities, share their experiences and seek appropriate adjustments or support. The openness of the culture has led to specific improvements to policies and procedures; especially in terms of flexible working arrangements and making adjustments for certain individuals. For example, the organisation does not force certain individuals who have sensory issues to wear formal attire or to come physically into the office; an arrangement that has helped spur “Claire’s” productivity.

As “Claire” puts it: “I get really exhausted being around people because I spend so much time second-guessing myself. Have I said something stupid? Why did I say that? You would not believe the level of mental load that takes up ... Whereas, if I am on zoom, I can either have my camera off or one-to-one with someone and that is fine; it reduces a lot of exhaustion for me. Being in the office is great from my productivity some days, and having people around really encourages me to get stuff done. However, on other days, all I can see is discussions happening and people walking past which makes it very difficult to focus or concentrate; and I get nothing done.”

Female, 30s/40s, HR professional.



HUNTER PRIMARY CARE

Janelle White is People and Culture Leader at Hunter Primary Care, an organisation that provides a broad range of healthcare and well-being services in the Newcastle/Hunter region, NSW.

Background

Diversity, equity and inclusion is one of the key strategic initiatives of the organisation for the current year. The aim is to develop a proper strategy that encompasses a lot more than the organisation has carried out to date.

In recent years, Hunter Primary has identified a need to improve the representation of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. This is due to an acknowledgment that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are under-represented in the workforce, which impacts its ability to deliver the services it provides to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recruitment

To tackle this, Hunter Care has adopted a series of initiatives that include:

- recruitment panels comprising Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees where possible to ensure there is a diversity of opinion during the interview process. This process includes having Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander employees welcome applicants and escort them to the interview
- working in partnership with a number of grass-roots organisations and specialist media, such as Koori Mail, to reach more candidates from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- specifying that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are welcome to apply on the job advert
- using influencers and social media to target young people

However, the organisation adds that developing a partnership with a local recruitment agency, that specialised in recruiting from this group, was not particularly successful. One of the key factors behind this was the long lead time, which did not align with recruitment need.

Culture and retention

Through its data analysis, Hunter Care uncovered a high labour turnover rate among Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. In response, they adopted a series of targeted initiatives to increase the retention rates of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Key tactics included:

- celebrating and participating in significant days such as NAIDOC week
- screening movies that are centred around Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islands culture. For example, Hunter Primary Care invited one of the stars of the movie Black Divas to take part in a Q&A following a screening of the movie for the workforce



- Running face-to-face cultural awareness training for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people twice a year. In addition, Hunter Primary Care organises LGBTQIA+ inclusive practice training
- Participating in other team-bonding events to increase its profile as an employer that is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders culture. Key events have included smoking ceremonies and workshops on language, food, weaving and tools and weapons
- An additional day of paid leave for NAIDOC week or another significant cultural event
- 5 days' sorry leave in addition to compassionate leave in recognition of the kinship rules of the community

Based on feedback from Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, the next step of the plan is to increase investment in managerial capability to help deal with the cultural sensitivity issues highlighted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

The next phase of the strategy is to target a wider range of under-represented groups, most notably people living with a disability.

Employer recommendations

Based on the survey findings, we have set out a series of recommendations to improve workplace diversity practice. These include:

RECRUITMENT

- Broadening recruitment methods and channels to widen the pools of available talent. These may include developing links with representative groups and employee referral schemes.
- Introducing internships, traineeships or apprenticeships to help boost the employment rate of under-represented groups. Chances of success can be optimised through closer partnerships with support agencies, NFP organisations and best practice agencies. Financial assistance may also be provided by government for both apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Organising open days that feature under-represented groups can help make your organisation more accessible and attractive to target groups.
- Being aware of the different government information hubs for different groups, such as JobAccess: [About JobAccess](#) | [Job Access](#).
- Diversify the recruitment panel and ensure that the recruitment process is transparent and accountable through an objective assessment. This may include a pre-defined set of questions and scoring criteria alongside skill or aptitude tests.
- Balanced shortlists at the recruitment stage may also be considered to improve diversity through the hiring process, which reinforces the need to be up to date with the latest legal requirements.
- Review existing recruitment processes to ensure that they are not inadvertently biased, e.g. graduate qualification requirement for roles that do not actually require a degree.

EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION (EVP)

- Testing, adopting and promoting a wide range of flexible working practices. Flexible working arrangements, which may include practices such as compressed hours, job sharing and part-time working, could also be highlighted when advertising roles. Employment rates could be further boosted by going beyond the legislative minimum standards in terms of the right to request flexible working legislation. These measures could disproportionately benefit people who identify as having a disability or neurodiverse.



LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

- Adopting mentoring and sponsorship initiatives, which a growing body of evidence shows, are highly effective in improving diversity in organisations. The introduction or expansion of such schemes should also include opportunities for mentees to progress into mentoring roles.
- Introducing diversity taskforces, especially given their effectiveness in improving the participation rate of under-utilised segments of the Australian workforce.
- Introducing a transparent data system that collects data across the different diversity dimensions. A comprehensive data collection system could include data at the recruitment stage, pay and employment gaps, representation on the board and/or senior management and quitting rates. Qualitative methods, such as feedback from staff surveys or employee resource groups, should be incorporated into the same data collection process.
- Linking the data collection system to an action plan, that may also include targets and review dates.
- To optimise the chances of success, consider appointing and supporting a champion in your senior management team to both act as a role model and to deliver on the action plan. In order to increase transparency and accountability. The action plan may be linked to key performance indicators (KPIs) at an individual or team level.

TRAINING

- Implement continuous diversity training, such as DEIB awareness training and information sessions and consider making it mandatory for all managers. Accompanying guidance should also be provided for all leaders and managers.



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Survey methodology

The survey was conducted by AHRI and took place online between 15 November and 2 December 2022. We had responses from 307 HR professionals in Australian organisations. In terms of sector, we had 163 responses from HR professionals in the private sector, 72 responses from HR professionals in the public sector, and 54 responses from HR professionals in the third/voluntary sector.

Not everyone answered every question. We report the number of respondents who answered a question as the base number under the corresponding tables or figures.

ANNEX

FIGURE 9: EMPLOYMENT RATE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

